STATE HISTORICAL RECORDS ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes

January 20, 1999

The State Historical Records Advisory Board met on January 20, 1999 at 10 a.m. in the Board Room at the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives. Present were: Richard Belding, Coordinator; Barbara Teague, Deputy Coordinator; Yvonne Baldwin, Morehead; Lee Dew, Owensboro; Riley Handy, Western Kentucky University; Rebecca Ryder, University of Kentucky; James Greene, Harlan Independent Schools; Mary Jane Kinsman, Louisville; Sharon Marcum, Governmental Services Center (GSC) Consultant; and Connie Renfroe, Public Records Division Secretary.

Mr. Belding welcomed the Board members. He stated that this meeting would be more of an information sharing session, where the Board would build a base of information to allow it to go on to the next stage of its strategic planning. Mr. Belding emphasized the importance of the Board's having an active strategic plan, both in terms of meeting a federal requirement of the NHPRC to be an active board, but also to have a framework on which to base the Board's work and to evaluate and recommend grant applications which the Board reviews and forwards to the Commission in Washington for consideration. He said it also can lead to making the Board eligible to become a regranting agency in its own right, to be able to apply to the Commission for regrant funds that the Board could in turn allocate to applicants in-state, typically for smaller projects that simply wouldn't be competitive on the national level.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the last meeting. Motion was seconded. Motion carried.

Mr. Belding introduced Mary Margaret Bell from the University of Louisville Archives, and Lynne Hollingsworth of the Kentucky Historical Society. He said they would be speaking on two NHPRC-funded projects currently underway which the Board had reviewed and recommended for funding.

Ms. Bell spoke on the State-Assisted Academic Library Council of Kentucky grant. She mentioned that the project got started in 1997 with the reorganization of higher education oversight in Kentucky and the promise of emerging technologies. The authorities wanted to create a "virtual university" to ultimately make university services widely available across the state. The heads of the libraries at the universities got together and assembled a plan on how to incorporate library materials into a companion "virtual library". They divided it into several

components, among them a Kentuckiana component, which was designed to provide archival special collections to a wide audience. Ms. Bell said they applied to NHPRC for a planning grant; its major component provided for two members to each contribute 20% of their time to the project, to gather material from the various institutions involved, and to work with a consultant to help determine what the needs were to accomplish the goal of this project. The grant would pay for the consultant. She mentioned that one of the significant goals of the project was developing a wider audience of people who can get information and resources on-line, who might not actually be able to visit repositories. Mr. Belding commented that this project had the potential to build support for institutions which have a custodial responsibility for these collections by making them more visible and more accessible to a public that could have an interest in using them, and to show ways these collections could be used.

Ms. Hollingsworth spoke on the Kentucky Historical Society grant project. She handed out a Project Summary, which explained the purpose and goals of the project; the significance of the project; the plan of work; products to be completed during the grant period, and key personnel involved in the project. Ms. Hollingsworth mentioned that a major project goal was to get as many collections processed and described for people who come to do research at the Kentucky History Center. The History Center should be open by April 10, 1999. Ms. Hollingsworth said she would assess the individual collections, ascertain their condition, and try to figure out ways to make them accessible, once they were processed. A cataloguer had been hired, allowing Ms. Hollingsworth to handle the processing and administrative work. Two hundred and ten feet of collections had been processed. Mr. Belding asked what they were doing to let the public know that this information was available on-line. Ms. Hollingsworth said they were planning an on-line exhibit, an in-house exhibit, and the use of the web-site.

Mr. Belding thanked the representatives of the grant projects for attending the meeting and for providing updates to the Board.

Ms. Marcum spoke on the strategic plan for the Board. She reviewed some of the material from the last meeting. She reiterated that creating a strategic plan is like an umbrella, under which everything else that a group does should logically fit. It holds the values, vision, and mission of the Board, under which are the goals, objectives, strategies, and action plans. At the last Board meeting, each Board member present volunteered to write a values statement as part of the Board's values, missions, and goals statement, which they were to submit to Mr. Belding. Mr. Belding handed out a draft copy of the compiled statements. The Board reviewed these. Ms. Baldwin asked what was to become of this strategic plan once it was published. Mr. Belding stated that it would be issued as a publication and would be sent to legislators and to resource allocators in various institutional settings (church archives, corporate archives, historical societies, etc.) as well as made available through KDLA's web site, on the page devoted to the SHRAB. He said that these were some of the audiences the Board wanted to reach, to let them know what the Board believes are the important issues that relate to historical records and what some of the unmet needs are. Mr. Handy suggested statewide workshops for introducing people to personal access, which would broaden people's knowledge of public records as well.

Ms. Marcum recorded the following ideas of Board members for improving the SHRAB brochure and defining the Board's roles and functions.

-make it forceful, state facts, not just beliefs

-historical records are ..

-eliminate redundancies in the 2nd para., 1st, 2 sentences

-stress stewardship

-long term, over time, do no harm

-keep the introductory narrative as personal as possible; share the philosophy

-provide samples of things that are documented in the historical record "imagine if we did not have ....

-new value - commitment - respond to the needs of the records

Board's Roles/Functions

- public advocacy, networking, communication for historical records planning
- encouraging and reviewing grant proposals
- liaison/adviser role to prospective applicants
- statewide coordinator
- public education
- participating in related statewide efforts

A lunch break was taken from 12 noon to 12:45 p.m.

Following lunch, Mr. Belding reviewed progress and accomplishments since the Board's study, Historical Records Needs Assessment Final Report (HRNAFR) was published in 1983. This report was the result of a year long series of activities, including surveys of particular constituencies, state government, local government and historical records repositories that are not public (such as historical societies and other private archival facilities). The report also identified a variety of critical archival needs and priorities. Mr. Belding mentioned that this report was very useful in that it made recommendations for short and long-term action that might be undertaken as a result of the findings in the report. Those became some of the targets that the Board used and the department used over the next decade as a guide. Mr. Belding stated that he would be distributing a status statement listing the activities that had been done in the areas of these recommendations. Some had their needs met, others had not.

The Board briefly reviewed the recommendations.

Mr. Belding introduced Jane Minder, Coordinator of the Kentucky Guide Program, Public Records Division. She handed out a "Report of Statistical Results from Historical Records Repository Survey for Kentucky." Ms. Minder reviewed the report and explained how statistics had been gathered during the period of October, 1996 through January, 1997. Kentucky had agreed to take part in a survey of historical records repositories as part of a project sponsored by the Council of State Historical Records Coordinators. A total of twenty-six states participated in this survey. Ms. Minder stated that the repositories in Kentucky chosen for this survey had to meet requirements, including having archival and manuscript collections which included certain records in different kinds of formats, such as paper, computer media, photographs, audiotapes or video tapes. Ms. Minder said that a six-page survey was sent out to 160 repositories. Some of the questions on the survey included:

- What kind of repository are you?
- What kind of collections do you have?
- Where do you store your records?
- How many staff/volunteers do you have?
- What is the financial support for this repository?

Only 98 actually replied. Ms. Minder stated that it was not a comprehensive survey, but that it gave us some idea of conditions, trends, and needs in historical records repositories in Kentucky.

Mr. Belding introduced Charles Robb, Manager of the Technology Analysis and Support Branch, Public Records Division. Mr. Robb distributed a copy of a chart "Timeline of Electronic Recordkeeping-Related Events."

He described the document as a very simple timeline of what KDLA had done in the area of electronic records. He said he had written a document, which was not quite completed, which was a history of KDLA's work in this area. Mr. Robb said that the 1983 HRNAFR pinpointed certain problems that KDLA faced with the computerized records increasingly being kept by state government. It focused largely on state government records and noted that KDLA staff didn't know how to go out and schedule these records for retention or how to treat electronic records that they encountered. He said it described a situation in agencies where the people who were using computer systems had new allies in the person of information systems staff. The conversations between the information systems staff and users was the only one occurring when it came to setting retention periods for electronic records, which was not appropriate from an archival perspective. KDLA needed to be involved in that kind of conversation, but it wasn't. KDLA also had the problem that many users didn't think of computerized data as records in the first place. The HRNAFR said KDLA staff needed better procedures for dealing with computerized records, more knowledge about them, and more training.

As a result of that initial survey and assessment, KDLA wrote and obtained a grant from NHPRC to undertake what was then called the MRR project (the machine-readable records project). It was going to use a database (data dictionary) that was already being developed in state government to form an inventory of computerized systems. This work was going to be done by the Department of Information Systems (DIS). Robb noted that KDLA essentially said, "if you let us participate in that project, this will give us an important inventory that we need, and we will be able to appraise these computerized records in the way that we want to, and we might even be able to build that database in such a way that it transfers the records that we target for archival retention to an electronic archives." This was a great idea. The grant project was funded and ran from 1985 to 1988, but unfortunately, it didn't turn out to work the way KDLA wanted. DIS had other purposes for that database. Robb said that KDLA needed more technical expertise than was provided for in the course of the grant. It was suppose to get a systems analyst, and that didn't happen. DIS ended up adjusting the schedule of implementation, so that KDLA really had very little input.

DIS suggested that KDLA might try instead to build a system of its own, which would interact with DIS's inventory data dictionary and which would do what KDLA wanted. The thought was that KDLA staff could put archival descriptions into its database and make these accessible and accomplish its goal with a separate system. Essentially, that side-tracked KDLA, particularly since KDLA didn't get adequate funding to build its own half of it. KDLA went through a design phase for this internal system that lasted from 1988, when KDLA was still calling what it was doing a model, until 1994.

Mr. Robb said that until the Cuadra Star software purchase in the mid-199Os, KDLA really never had a database of its own to hold this kind of information. KDLA's goal for computerized records was the same thing staff was doing for other records, namely to inventory them, to appraise them, to transfer them to a records repository, or to destroy them, where that was appropriate. KDLA definitely wants to destroy somewhere around 90 percent of the records they are aware of and likewise wants to describe and make accessible the records worth keeping, those of continuing value. Everything the staff has done since 1984 has essentially been a tactical attempt to be able to do that for computerized records, in the same way it is done with other records.

It was very important for KDLA to ally with DIS. In the mid 1980s, a Kentucky Information Systems Commission (KISC) was established. KDLA allied with it and the head of the State Archives or the KDLA Commissioner has been on that Commission since it was created. Through those alliances, KDLA has enhanced its position where it comes to dealing with individual agencies themselves on electronic records issues.

KISC implemented a strategic planning process in the late 1980s that required state agencies to write information resources plans (IRPs). From those plans, KDLA staff gathered more information than it had ever had before about the systems that are actually in the agencies.

Through this kind of mechanism, KDLA has been working on the system inventory problem. Once systems are inventoried, KDLA staff know better how to appraise them. Throughout this period, as agencies were complying with these requirements through the planning process, KDLA staff were getting a better and better inventory. In the initial data dictionary, something like 200 mainframe systems were documented. Through the IRP planning process, KDLA was up to 600 systems by the late 1980s. Currently there are something like 1800 systems documented. Every other year, the agencies will tell KDLA generally what they are going to invest their money in and a little bit about the systems themselves, but it has been an inadequate amount of information to get these systems on schedule.

KDLA took the path of determining what part of those had potential archival value, and it was something like 10-20%, but KDLA staff had no means to schedule all of them. Although KDLA expanded its technical skills, it still has very few staff to put out in agencies to complete the scheduling projects, and without agency participation, it has no hope of really doing what it wants to with those. The number of systems actually or schedule, while it has grown, is not what KDLA would hope that it would be.

Robb felt that KDLA's problem was that the agencies would like to know from it, up front, what KDLA would like to keep, what documentation would satisfy its requirement, and how they could build the capacity to get that out of their systems. He said that archivists haven't, as a profession, worked very hard at articulating a documentation strategy, a finite list of business functions or of things that need to be documented adequately. Rather, archivist have asked agencies to tell archival agencies about all of their records, and that takes time to respond to, and time is of the essence in all of these agencies.

Robb believed that the direction archivists needed to go was one where the scheduling process has been streamlined as much as possible and where staff can analyze the kinds of things that they have historically gotten from agencies and go in with as much information as possible about the agencies' core functions and responsibilities. With this in hand, it's not as hard for them to identify the information desired and to capture it electronically. Robb observed that in essence, part of the problem has less to do with the fact that the records are becoming increasingly computerized and more to do with the basic of method of pinpointing the kind of information needed. He said he recognized that unless one knew a fair amount about what KDLA did for every other record, it could be somewhat confusing, but he hoped this background summary was helpful.

Mr. Belding said he was glad that Mr. Robb had dwelt on the issue of documentation strategy and knowing what information one wants and how to go about getting that. He said that these are initiatives that other states had looked at and some have implemented and that the National Archives also is a leader in that area. He also noted that it was helpful to keep in mind that within Kentucky's existing State Archives and Records Act, there is a section of the statute which speaks to that same issue in terms of the responsibilities that public agencies have (under the terms of KRS 171.640). Agencies have a clear obligation under that statute to

document their essential functions, policies, procedures, and core activities. There is a clear sense in that portion of the statute of the relationship between the actions of a public agency and what one could call the accountability trail that relates to that performance.

Mr. Robb said that it had been very interesting for him, in going back and doing research on this, to see that he hadn't misunderstood what he saw, that this element of the statute was changed only in 1986. Prior to that time, that requirement wasn't there. He believed that it was put in with the expectation that KDLA would follow it up with an administrative regulation. Because the department was in a period of significant transition then, it wasn't well positioned to take advantage of that new law. He found it interesting that this kind of leverage was identified as important.

Mr. Belding observed that this was one of several pieces of legislation that were passed really with the support of KISC, in response to the potential challenge of managing electronic records. It is also helpful to know that almost the same language exists in the federal records statute for the National Archives. He said it had a lot of potential but that it was also an area for which it would be difficult to write an administrative regulation. He then asked those in attendance if they had questions for Mr. Robb.

Ms. Teague observed that Mr. Robb had been talking about government records or about electronic records on a grand scale, and how government archivists have had problems preserving those. She said the same would be true for historical records repositories, that generally relied on private citizens to donate family and other papers of potential historical interest. Her point was that the same was going to happen in those repositories to that type of record, too. More people email their families, rather than write. People don't write a letters, they telephone. Most people don't keep a diary anymore, they are simply too busy. She wondered whether in the long run, this wouldn't impact collecting for those in historical records repositories in the same way.

Mr. Robb said he thought the situation would be more severe there because an individual is more apt to rely on that kind of storage than an agency would be. Private individuals are going to keep information in that environment because of the potential convenience, despite the fact that such storage situations could be quite fragile. They are dependent on the software they created. He thought there would be period of time in which there will be a deficit of that kind of material potentially. On the other hand, he thought that a lot of actual losses were what it might take to make a whole industry better aware of the potential risk. He said there was a lot of interest in developing portable electronic documents that incorporate the software that made them into the files themselves. This kind of thing can be done and is very expensive and until the cost is absorbed across the board, because of a need felt at all levels, Mr. Robb didn't think it would be available to most people. He predicted some information management failures and said that the Board and archivists generally needed to make a lot of noise about wanting these tools, in order to really improve the quality of everyone's working environment. He said it would take the kind of "year 2000" problem to illustrate loss of documentation.

Mr. Belding asked if he could speak to the issue of whether institutions like universities, which may have different kinds of resources available to them than a state archives or the Jefferson County Archives, would have better potential for dealing with any kind of custodial role for the maintenance of electronic records over the long term. Mr. Robb said that several of the most well-known archival thinkers in this area believe that we are going to be moving into an era of distributed archives where the creating agency will keep those materials. At the same time, he thought it possible to write regulations and to do enough follow-ups to move state archival agencies out of the position of keeping everything. For example, the Office of Geographic Information n Systems (OGIS) is very good at keeping standardized data that they have put onto maps. Anything with a geographic reference, they can put on a map and do very good things with it for all kinds of analyses that agencies want to do. They have very good descriptive standards that they use to tell what those data sets are. They have standardized that activity in Kentucky, and it's a requirement that the agency catalog its own information, which he said was a wonderful concept and one which KDLA hopes to take advantage of. But at the moment, there is no more than a handshake agreement regarding how they are going to keep that information, and where they are going to keep it, once they are done with it. In an agency like the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Cabinet, which has a kind of scientific purpose for keeping information for a long period of time, they recognize that problem. They are prepared to plan on how they are going to do it, but in an agency like the Finance and Administration Cabinet, that might, from KDLA's point of view, have a need to keep data for a long time in an electronic form, there may be a different sensitivity towards that need.

Mr. Robb thought there was going to have to be an actual electronic archives. Whether the records are physically here at the State Archives was still to be decided. He noted that it took a substantial support mechanism to keep a facility like that going. The National Archives has very expensive equipment that they use to accession material, and that kind of equipment is needed in an electronic archives. Whether the Natural Resources type of agency wants to invest in those remains an unknown. Mr. Robb thought they really didn't want to. He didn't think that they were aware of what that investment would be. But he said that KDLA staff were confident that smaller agencies aren't prepared to make those investments. They are more likely to leave it on a shelf somewhere. Mr. Robb acknowledged the need for better regulations in that area, and that it was necessary to get agencies to agree that KDLA could have an electronic archives viewable from here but physically over at DIS. But programmatically, those resources would be KDLA's. They would bill us for keeping it. It could be over there or upstairs or in an addition to this building but it has to be somewhere. But he said it was going to take some work to figure that out, to get an agreement basically. KDLA can continue to work toward a solution, in collaboration with DIS and other interested state parties, but how to pay for it will be a challenging question.

A Board member asked about the permanency of these records. Mr. Robb said they are not going to be permanent. The assumption is that information in electronic form will need to be

periodically migrated forward from medium to medium over time. One would have the confidence that though it had been moved forward, this is the same data you had originally. This would be known through documentation and through tests that would be run on the kind of electronic equipment that the National Archives currently uses. It may have the potential to last 10 years or longer or a shorter period of time. The National Archives is going to rewind its tapes on a 2-4 year interval and are going to replace the media entirely on a periodic basis.

Another Board member thought that it would make more financial sense to have a centralized hardware facility and standardized software for operating, as state guidelines already suggest, with an eye toward encouraging people to use approved operating systems and approved software and depositing copies and documentation.

Mr. Robb said that it was clearly a cost of doing business but that it was it was cheaper to do it that way. He noted that the appointment of a Chief Information Officer (CIO) gives KDLA a good opportunity to have discussions about future custodial control with somebody with greater authority. Insofar as heads of agencies work very closely with that person, KDLA is more hopeful about future prospects. It offers a better channel of communicating these issues to the administration and to agencies.

Mr. Belding said it might be helpful to mention that the Chief Information Officer is a position that Governor Patton created by Executive Order. Subsequently, legislation was passed which defined the responsibilities of the position. There hasn't been someone with that scope of authority, to bring order to the information technology universe in state government, before. The new CIO, Dr. Aldona Valicenti, is the former Chief Information Officer for AMOCO Oil.

Mr. Belding said that efforts would be made to draft a survey that could be circulated to 176 school districts, 120 clerks and 430 cities (15-4 class) served by the KDLA's Local Records staff. Ms. Marcum recommended that the Board get started on brainstorming goals at the next meeting, because there would be additional information available from the survey, which might be helpful. The next meeting dates would be the second week of July and the third Wednesday in October. The Board will review survey results from the Historical Records Repository Survey (HRRS) and from a review of electronic records practice in public agencies over the past fifteen year, taken from Mr. Robb's time line of developments.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.